

EWG Sues FDA for Failure to Regulate "Brazilian Blowout" Products

PRODUCTS OF INTEREST, US FDA

By LANA BECKETT, January 17, 2017

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) and Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE) **sued the Food and Drug Administration**¹⁾ (FDA) for its failure to protect the public from dangers associated with popular hair straightening treatments.

In the lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the groups charge that the FDA has failed to adequately respond to the concerns raised about the health risks salon keratin hair products containing formaldehyde pose.

"For years stylists have reported that the application of these hair treatments caused difficulty breathing, eye irritation and nosebleeds," said Tina Sigurdson, EWG assistant general counsel. "The FDA has been aware of the health hazards associated with the products **since at least 2008**²⁾ . Despite these dangers, the FDA has yet to take action to remove them from the market."

High levels of formaldehyde³⁾ , a potent allergen and human carcinogen, make many keratin hair straightening treatments a serious health threat to both clients and salon workers. These treatments – often known by the popular brand name Brazilian Blowout – involve liquids applied to hair in the salon, which are then heated using blow dryers and straightening irons. The high temperatures of these hair styling tools cause the release of formaldehyde from the liquids into the air.

In 2011, **EWG filed a citizen petition**⁴⁾ , or formal request, that the agency investigate the products and take appropriate action. After five years, the FDA has not issued a final response to that letter, nor has it taken any significant action against makers of the products.

The suit filed today argues that the FDA has failed its duty by unreasonably delaying its response. It asks the court to order FDA action by setting and enforcing a deadline for the agency to investigate and respond to the petition.

Resources for this article

1. sued the Food and Drug Administration

<https://prop65clearinghouse.com/documents/19162>

2. since at least 2008

<http://www.allure.com/story/scared-straight>

3. High levels of formaldehyde

<http://www.ewg.org/hair-straighteners/our-report/hair-straighteners-that-hide-formaldehyde/>

4. EWG filed a citizen petition

<http://www.ewg.org/enviroblog/2012/03/ewg-fda-step-it-formaldehyde-laced-hair-straighteners>